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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2017  
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SUBJECT: TALABANI ON EARLY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL BUSINESS,  
DEBA'ATHIFICATION

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Iraqi President Jalal Talabani discussed the Executive Council (formerly known as the "3 1") and other topics in an informal dinner on January 20 with the Ambassador. He said the Council plans to shrink the Council of Ministers by nearly half, but also to reincorporate most of the blocs that for months have been boycotting its meetings. Talabani claimed to have persuaded Vice President Hashimi not to veto the de-Ba'athification law, in return for promising to support Hashimi's proposed amendments to the law at a later date. Finally, the President argued that the time has come for Tawafuq head Adnan Dulaymi to leave Iraq. End summary.

#### Executive Council to Shrink the Cabinet

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¶2. (C) Talabani discussed the early business of the Executive Council, the name of which he credited to Vice President Hashimi and which derives from Article 66 of Iraq's constitution. A priority is to trim the cabinet to 22 members, which will include dismissing all ministers of state. Talabani acknowledged the potential difficulties with all political groups losing representation. He said the re-shuffle could happen either by persuading each minister to resign, or by Maliki himself resigning but receiving a letter the same day recommending his reappointment with a new cabinet. Talabani was unable to suppress a mischievous grin as he said this, presumably because all in the room knew he very nearly participated in a move to oust Maliki a month earlier. Talabani also said Fadhila had agreed to return to the cabinet and Tawafuq and Iraqiyya had held productive talks on the subject, but did not specify how this would square with a reduced ministerial cadre. Finally, Talabani said the Executive Council would meet next on Wednesday, January 23, not Monday the 21st because of a request from Maliki.

#### Hashimi Not Vetoing De-Ba'ath

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¶3. (C) Talabani said he and Hashimi agreed that the latter would not veto the de-Ba'athification law if Talabani in the future supported a list of amendments to the bill. The Ambassador thanked Talabani for his helpful influence on the Vice President, to which Talabani replied that Hashimi had come to trust him and understand that he supported him and his party. "Leave Hashimi to me," Talabani quipped, "and Maliki is for you." (Note: Hashimi's senior political advisor confirmed this arrangement between Talabani and Hashimi to Poloff on January 21, adding that the VP would sign the bill but "with a condition" -- that is, signature along with a statement explaining the Vice President's understandings on how particular elements of the legislation are to be implemented. End note).

¶4. (C) In a private aside, Talabani said it was time for Tawafuq leader Adnan Dulaymi to leave Iraq permanently. Dulaymi's son, in Talabani's estimation, is guilty of the criminal charges against him, and Dulaymi's meeting with Maliki the previous day had been courteous but produced little of substance. Parliament speaker Mahmoud Mashadani expressed the same sentiment in a meeting the previous day, Talabani added. (Note: Dulaymi's son and bodyguards were arrested November 29 after car bombs were discovered alongside Dulaymi's office. Talabani subsequently assigned a Peshmerga security detail to protect Dulaymi.)

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